



Good morning.

My name is Michael Schroeder and I am a resident of New Britain. I am president of Central Connecticut Communications, and editor and publisher of The New Britain Herald, The Bristol Press, the Newington Town Crier and Wethersfield Post. I am also vice president of the Connecticut Daily Newspaper Association.

Our newspapers have been serving their communities for over 130 years. But this came extremely close to an end in 2009, when the Journal Register Company started implementing a plan to shut them down when they couldn't find a buyer. But fortunately that didn't happen. We were able to keep the papers open, providing an objective voice in cities and towns through Central Connecticut and local reporting to approximately 30,000 readers each week.

When we took over the papers, we knew our mission would not be easy. No one could have expected the economic challenges we have faced over the past four years, but we knew that providing local journalism was our calling, and a necessity in keeping the citizenry informed. Later, we discovered how important local newspapers are as a glue holding the community together, especially in tough times.

Legal notice requirements are in place for one reason: to keep our citizens informed about what our government is doing. From public meetings to construction bid requirements, people that want to know can get this information in their local newspaper. The state wisely legislated requirements to ensure that localities publish this information, at a reasonable cost to the public.

With talk that newspapers are no longer the conduit of news they once were, we also need to recognize that internet access and usage is not ubiquitous. Nearly two-thirds of people 65 and over do not use computers, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. These citizens are over-represented among newspaper readers. Do these people get local news – I mean town-level news – from TV and radio? They don't, because it doesn't exist.

For those that truly have access to current technology, and are in a position to use it, newspapers have adapted by providing consolidated notices on the website ctlegalnotices.com. If you have the access, this is an easy way to get the information, not dependent on localities.

Yes, the towns do pay to publish these notices. We believe that the expense to ensure consistent, reliable public information on multiple platforms, provided through a process tested and proven over time, is a bargain. The newspaper industry has shown it can adapt to changing times, and will continue to evolve.

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And yes, this is an “unfunded mandate,” and it’s fair to target all such laws in a time of looming deficits. But is it wise to eliminate transparency in government, leaving it to municipalities to fulfill their responsibilities to keep their constituents informed – and endangering the only source of local reporting many communities have?

Beyond their special role in society, newspapers also are employers, tenants and taxpayers. They employ hundreds in the state and purchase services from firms that employ others. All are active in the betterment of their communities. Can we afford to jeopardize another institution?

A free press is always under attack, for one reason or another, in good times as well as bad. Nothing has changed. An informed citizenry deserves a watchful press at every level, especially close to home. It is our responsibility to provide it.